



STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2029

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Foreword

The Scottish Islands Federation (SIF) has long stood at the forefront of advocating for the needs and voices of Scotland’s island communities. Since its establishment in 2000, our mission has been to support island organisations in sharing experiences, strengthening representation, and ensuring that island interests are firmly on the policy agenda at all levels of government.

As we look ahead to the next five years, this strategic plan for 2025–2030 outlines a clear vision for continuing to support and empower our island communities. With a growing network and an increasingly influential role in shaping policies, SIF is well-positioned to build on its legacy of strengthening island voices.

This plan is shaped by the distinctive challenges and opportunities that island communities face—whether it is the high cost of living, geographic isolation, or the need for tailored policy solutions that reflect the unique characteristics of island life. It also reflects the realities of the broader economic landscape, which demands that we remain adaptable, innovative, and resilient as we pursue sustainable solutions for Scotland’s islands.

At its core, SIF is a conduit between island communities and the Scottish Government, ensuring that islanders have a direct line to policymakers and that their voices are heard in the decision-making processes that impact their daily lives. We continue to support engagement with the Scottish Government through the Island Communities Impact Assessments (ICIAs), the development of the second National Islands Plan, and other key policy initiatives. Our role as a trusted partner and facilitator is critical in ensuring that island communities are not only considered but actively involved in shaping the policies that affect them.

As we work towards the implementation of this strategic plan, we remain committed to being a voice for all island communities—strengthening connections, enhancing visibility, and ensuring their unique needs are fully recognised and addressed. Through our collaborative approach and focus on fostering meaningful dialogue, we will continue to empower island communities to thrive and flourish in a rapidly changing world.

We are confident that the actions laid out in this plan will guide SIF as it navigates the complexities of the evolving policy environment, while remaining steadfast in its commitment to the well-being of Scotland's islands and the people who call them home.



Luke Fraser

Introduction

This document outlines the Scottish Islands Federation's (SIF) strategic plan for 2025–2030, setting a clear direction for the next five years. It presents a high-level vision for sustaining the momentum of our growing network and organisational development, while strengthening our role in shaping islands policy and advancing community empowerment across Scotland's Island communities.

Background

The Scottish Islands Federation (SIF) was established in 2000 as a Local Authority-funded network. Its founding mission was to support island organisations in voicing their perspectives, sharing experiences, and strengthening their representation at local, regional, national, and European levels—on all matters impacting the long-term sustainability of Scotland's islands.

In 2007, SIF transitioned from a network to a federation, reflecting the growing demand from island communities for a more representative, active, and vocal organisation. Today, SIF operates as a collaborative network of island communities, united in strengthening their collective voice on shared challenges and exchanging knowledge and ideas to drive meaningful change.

The Federation is governed by a voluntary board of Directors, elected from and by its membership. Its core activities are currently funded exclusively by the Scottish Government and member subscriptions.

What We Do

Islanders often face distinct needs, circumstances, and aspirations compared to other parts of the country. SIF works to amplify these voices by promoting understanding, raising awareness, and ensuring that islanders have meaningful access to both local and national policymakers on the issues that matter most to their quality of life. We advocate for the Scottish Government and local authorities to fully consider the unique challenges and priorities of island communities. At the same time, we foster connection and knowledge-sharing across Scotland's islands—strengthening social networks and building lasting relationships across stakeholders, geographies, and generations. Our role in supporting the development of Island Communities Impact Assessments (ICIAs) continues to grow, and SIF is now recognised as a key point of contact for policymakers seeking expert input and guidance on national island policy.

Since becoming a Federation in 2007, SIF has expanded both its reach across the Scottish islands and the breadth of its work. Alongside this growth, we have strengthened our internal infrastructure by introducing more robust systems and adopting a more professional approach—including the development of our Fair Work

Policy. We have invested in workforce training and development, established a staff mentoring programme, and continue to benefit from the strategic input of our Board of Directors, who act as ambassadors for SIF and our members at local, national, and international levels.

Operating Context

Broader Economy

SIF operates within a context of financial instability, as Scotland's third sector faces mounting challenges driven by rising demand and broader economic pressures. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly increased the demand for third sector services across the UK, including in Scotland. Charities and voluntary organisations, including SIF, had to rapidly adapt—balancing heightened service needs with growing financial and operational constraints. For SIF, this meant pivoting quickly to support island resilience and facilitate the sharing of best practices across our communities.

The economic impact has been further compounded by inflation, which has driven up core operating costs such as salaries, insurance, and essential licences. At the same time, the ongoing cost-of-living crisis continues to disproportionately affect island communities, with some areas experiencing living costs up to 65% higher than those on the mainland. These pressures have raised serious concerns about the long-term sustainability and viability of island populations.

All of this is set against a backdrop of increasingly competitive and constrained funding. Access to long-term, unrestricted core funding remains limited, and the funding landscape is often characterised by complex application processes, inconsistent reporting requirements and short-term, intermittent funding rounds. These combined challenges demand ongoing support and strategic adaptation across the third sector.

In this environment, SIF's role as a trusted conduit between island communities and policymakers has never been more vital. We continue to advocate for equitable investment, policy attention, and practical solutions that reflect the realities of island life

Policy Environment

The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 establishes the Scottish Government's commitment to improving outcomes for island communities. A key provision of the Act (Section 3) requires Scottish Ministers to develop a National Islands Plan. Launched on 27 December 2019, Scotland's first-ever National Islands Plan (NIP) sets out a strategic framework for action, structured around 13 Strategic Objectives aimed at supporting sustainable and thriving island communities.

Since the introduction of the Island Communities Impact Assessments (Publication and Review of Decisions) (Scotland) Regulations in 2020, direct engagement with island communities has become a legal requirement for the Scottish Government and over 70 other relevant authorities when developing policy. Given the distinct challenges faced by island communities—such as geographic isolation, limited connectivity, and demographic pressures—it is essential that these factors are meaningfully considered in the policymaking process. SIF plays a key role in supporting policy teams across the Scottish Government by facilitating targeted community engagement with those most affected, helping to ensure that Island Communities Impact Assessments (ICIAs) are robust, relevant, and of high quality.

The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 mandates that the National Islands Plan be reviewed by the Scottish Government every five years, and this review is currently underway. As part of the process, SIF supported the Scottish Government in 2023 to conduct an extensive consultation, gathering feedback from both the public and island communities about the Plan. The consultation highlighted broad consensus on the need for a new National Islands Plan. Following Ministerial approval, the intention is to publish the updated Plan in 2025.

In 2025, SIF has continued to support the development of the Scottish Government's new National Islands Plan by assisting the Islands Team in organising over 40 engagement sessions, both in-person and online. These sessions seek input from island communities on the content and deliverables of the new Plan, in accordance with the statutory requirements of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018. SIF's role includes coordinating detailed travel logistics, facilitating connections between key island stakeholders, and promoting targeted communications to ensure the sessions are meaningful and beneficial for both island communities and Scottish Government officials

The introduction of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, along with the National Islands Plan and the Island Communities Impact Assessments (ICIA) Regulations 2020, has led to increased engagement from island communities across a range of Scottish Government policy areas. This includes participation in ICIAs as well as broader policy consultations. However, contributing meaningfully to these processes can be challenging for island communities, particularly given the volume of consultations and the reliance on volunteers. It is equally challenging for the Scottish Government to gather consistent, representative input from across diverse island areas, especially given geographical barriers and varying local capacities. The Scottish Islands Federation (SIF) supports both its members and the Scottish Government by coordinating collective input and building capacity across its network. Drawing on our experience in effective engagement and our strong island-wide connections, we help

ensure that island voices are heard and that participation is both informed and impactful.

Competitive Landscape

SIF operates within a crowded third-sector landscape, with many organisations focusing on rural policy, engagement, and thematic areas critical to rural communities. While there are undeniable similarities, the challenges faced by rural and island communities are distinct and should not be conflated. What sets SIF apart is our exclusive focus on island communities and the specific thematic areas that impact them. This aligns with Scottish Government policy, which recognises the unique needs of island areas, as demonstrated in the Islands (Scotland) Act and the Rural and Islands Housing Action Plan. While there is significant overlap with other organisations on key policy areas, this often leads to collaboration rather than competition. SIF remains distinctive in the funding landscape, filling a unique geographical and thematic gap that is not addressed by other organisations.

Crucially, SIF serves as a vital conduit between the Scottish Government and island communities, facilitating the flow of information both to and from islanders. Given the broad geographical spread and diverse demographic, economic, and social characteristics of island communities, it is essential that the Scottish Government can effectively engage with members on the issues that impact them. This aligns directly with the principles of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018. While official channels, such as Local Authorities, exist, SIF operates at the grassroots level, uniquely positioned to represent communities and ensure their voices are heard. Our role is distinct in both facilitating communication to the Scottish Government and ensuring that island communities are informed and engaged in policy development.

For example, while all of Scotland is experiencing a housing crisis, the challenge is significantly amplified in island areas—so much so that it threatens the long-term viability of our communities as places to live, work, and thrive. The policies and solutions required in island contexts are often distinct from those on the mainland. To share learning on what works, collaborate on practical solutions, and contribute to policy development, we coordinate a highly active Island Housing Working Group. Over the past year, we have worked closely with the Scottish Government's More Homes Division, delivering three practical learning exchange sessions, curating two housing-focused sessions for the Cross-Party Group on Islands, and meeting with the Minister for Housing. We also prepared and submitted a position paper outlining key island-specific themes and questions to inform national housing policy.

Additionally, SIF represents Scotland's islands in both national and European discussions and learning events, ensuring island perspectives are included in wider policy dialogue. This includes active involvement in the Cross-Party Group (CPG) on

Islands, which serves as a key forum for highlighting island issues and opportunities. The CPG now has a growing membership of over 300, reflecting strong and increasing engagement. In partnership with Scottish Rural Action, SIF provides the secretariat for the group, helping to shape agendas and coordinate discussions. Recent themes have included ferries, the National Islands Plan, housing, the island economy, and the transition to net zero.

As a member of the European Small Islands Federation, SIF plays an active role in shaping pan-European Smart Islands strategies, including engagement with the Clean Energy for EU Islands initiative. We also work closely with our members to gather meaningful input for key consultations and policy responses, supporting the Scottish Government in developing approaches that promote the long-term sustainability of island communities. For example, we organised a workshop on the proposed New Build Heat Standard, where concerns were raised around the high cost of clean energy installation and maintenance, the reduced energy independence it could create, the lack of viable alternatives to wood burners for off-grid islands, grid capacity constraints, and the potential impact on population retention. As a result of this work, SIF members were invited to participate in a ministerial roundtable with Dr Alasdair Allan MSP. The outcome was positive, with the Scottish Government agreeing to relax planned regulations around wood burners in recognition of island-specific challenges.

Organisational Philosophy

Vision

Our vision is for Scotland's island communities to thrive sustainably, where islanders can live, work, and flourish within their own communities, while attracting new residents to ensure long-term vitality and growth.

Mission

Our mission is to be the leading organisation championing the interests of Scotland's island communities by:

- Influencing and supporting policy development at local, regional, national, and European levels to ensure the prosperity of our islands;
- Providing island communities with the opportunity to amplify their voices on shared challenges and priorities; and
- Fostering collaboration and the exchange of ideas to drive meaningful and sustainable change.

Mandate

The Scottish Islands Federation will support its mission by:

- Developing a diverse and inclusive membership that represents all Scottish islands;
- Ensuring community and voluntary groups have a strong, active voice within the Federation;
- Collaborating with councils, local agencies, and the Scottish Government to ensure island needs are understood and addressed;
- Advocating for the interests of Scottish islands at regional, national, and European levels;
- Fostering the sharing of best practices and facilitating information exchange among island communities;
- Promoting networking and collaboration on and between islands across Scotland and Europe; and
- Acquiring, sharing, and leveraging knowledge resources to support islanders' needs and aspirations.

Impact Strategy

SIF is driven by its members which include Development Trusts, Community Companies, Community Councils, individual islanders, and other bodies concerned with the sustainability of island communities. The more members SIF has, the stronger and more proactive we can become – a key aim of the organisation is to build a network which represents the interests of all Scotland's inhabited islands.



By the 31st of March 2026 SIF will:

- Review and improve our membership offer by considering whether additional benefits could be included;
- Host at least 8 knowledge exchange events for our members on key areas of policy; and
- Host our AGM in a dynamic and engaging manner.

While all our members are part of a collective network, each is also an individual islander with unique needs and perspectives. The benefits of SIF membership include enhanced capacity—especially for contributing to consultations—access to valuable learning opportunities, reduced isolation, and a sense of belonging within a wider community. Members also gain a stronger, unified voice through collaboration, along with direct opportunities to engage with policymakers on issues that matter most to island communities.

Thematic Engagement

Each year, SIF hosts a series of online sessions on pressing and emerging issues, offering members valuable opportunities to connect, share insights, explore island priorities, and contribute to policy development. In response to member feedback, these sessions have evolved into facilitated working groups that foster collaboration and support the development of communities of practice. Current groups focus on key areas such as housing, marine litter, and climate resilience. In addition to this work, SIF actively promotes the achievements and initiatives happening across the islands and within our membership. We regularly publish news articles, case studies, and our “Featured Island” series, which can be found in the news section of our [website](#) as well as on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

Island communities face many shared challenges and opportunities—such as those related to housing, transport, broadband, healthcare, population decline, climate change, limited childcare, fuel poverty, and the cost of living. However, it can often be difficult for individual communities to voice their concerns and respond to policy consultations effectively. SIF acts as a vital conduit, ensuring members are informed about relevant policy developments and have the opportunity to collaborate in shaping and influencing decision-making. We share policy updates, work with members to prepare joint submissions, and increasingly facilitate policy sessions that enable direct dialogue with the Scottish Government.

Policy Engagement

SIF has developed a structured and collaborative process to navigate the complexities of the island policy landscape. We regularly review active consultations to determine the most appropriate course of action—whether to submit a response on behalf of our members, convene an online policy session, or simply promote the consultation to island communities for wider awareness and participation.

When we decide to submit a formal response, we begin by drafting key points and sharing them with our members for feedback. Member input is gathered through direct communication, email, and discussion, and is then used to develop a full response. This draft is circulated again for final comments and approval before submission, ensuring that it reflects a collective island voice.

A good example of this process in action was SIF’s response to the consultation on Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs). We initially reviewed the consultation, drafted key points, and shared them directly with members as well as through our website and social media channels. Feedback was gathered via email and conversations with members, informing a full response that was subsequently circulated for agreement before final submission.

We are regularly approached by various Scottish Government departments to support engagement with island communities—whether for Island Communities Impact Assessments (ICIAs), early-stage policy development, or ongoing consultations. Our primary approach involves proposing and organising online meetings where Scottish Government representatives present relevant information, followed by open discussions with island community members. This format has proven highly effective: communities appreciate the opportunity for direct dialogue, while government officials gain valuable insights that help shape more relevant and responsive policies. When additional support is needed, we also coordinate focused events or thematic learning exchanges, producing summary reports that capture and reflect the voices of island communities.

A recent example is our involvement in the ICIA for the mitigation of the two-child cap. SIF worked closely with community representatives to highlight key issues, including the higher cost of living in island areas, how poverty can be obscured in available data, the potential demographic impact, and the importance of improving local awareness around available support.

Consultation fatigue is a significant and growing challenge for island communities, many of which rely on the time and efforts of unpaid volunteers. These communities are frequently called upon to respond to a wide range of policy consultations and engagement requests. Given our own limited capacity, it is not always possible for SIF to engage with every consultation. However, when we are able to contribute, SIF plays a vital role in adding capacity, amplifying community voices, and ensuring more equitable representation across Scotland’s islands. Without this support, the voices of grassroots island communities would often be limited—or absent entirely—from important policy conversations. A full list of our consultation responses is available on our [website](#).

Financial Strategy

The Financial Strategy outlines how SIF will manage its financial resources to achieve its vision and mission while ensuring long-term growth. Each strategy presented in this document carries resource implications, and SIF carefully evaluates each potential workstream to assess its feasibility. We only proceed with initiatives once we have secured adequate funding to cover the associated costs. SIF does not commit to any delivery obligations that it cannot afford. Expenditures for all workstreams are closely monitored on a monthly basis by the Finance Sub-Group, with detailed reports submitted to the full Board each month for review and approval.

SIF's financial position and future funding needs are closely monitored by the Finance sub-group, which includes one of the Vice Chairs, a director, and a staff member. This group meets monthly to review the updated cashflow projections for the next 12 months, assess any imminent cashflow demands, and track the progress of grant claims and upcoming applications. The sub-group ensures that VAT considerations are factored into discussions about new income sources and monitors the allocation and future cashflow of grants tied to specific workstreams. A finance report is prepared each month and circulated to the Board for review and feedback.

SIF's income for 2024/25 comprised of:

Work Stream		Amount	%
Secondment income			
Islands Programme	£84,069		
CNI	£80,529		
		£154,695	56%
SG Grant for core activities		£74,000	26%
Grants for Marine Litter activities		£49,325	17%
Subscription income		£2,000	1%
Total		£289,923	

SIF currently second two full-time employees to the Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) on 12-month contracts, working 32 hours per week each. These secondments support the delivery of the Islands Programme, the Islands Cost Crisis Emergency Fund, and the Carbon Neutral Islands (CNI) Programme on behalf of the Scottish Government (SG). The need for specialist secondees, along with the specific arrangements, is reviewed annually by SFT and SG. Requirements for 2026/27 are expected to be considered in late 2025, with decisions made in early 2026.

Through this arrangement, SIF provides highly skilled staff with expertise in areas such as sustainable development, community empowerment, and policy implementation.

Embedding these professionals within national programmes strengthens the capacity of SFT and partner organisations while ensuring that island perspectives are fully integrated into policy design and delivery. By bridging the gap between national policy formulation and local implementation, SIF helps to ensure that policies are responsive to the unique needs of island communities. This model also fosters long-term collaboration and knowledge transfer between SIF, SFT, and SG, ensuring that the expertise gained continues to inform future policy development.

Excluding secondment income, SIFs income of £125,325 for 2024/25 comprised: 59% SG core grant of £74,000, 39% Marine Litter funding £49,325 and 2% members' subscriptions £2,000.

One area where SIF has successfully diversified its work and funding is in tackling marine litter. This initiative is delivered by self-employed consultants on 12-month contracts, aligned with the duration of available funding. While this model offers flexibility and ensures efficient use of resources, it also highlights the pressing need for more secure, longer-term investment to provide stability and enable growth across our workstreams. Reliance on year-to-year funding creates uncertainty, hampers long-term planning, and limits our ability to build sustained capacity.

SIF's core funding for general operations is currently reliant solely on the Scottish Government and member subscriptions. While these income streams are essential, the heavy dependence on just two sources presents a significant financial risk, particularly in the face of changing funding priorities or economic fluctuations.

The goals for the upcoming financial years are to:

- Further diversify the nature of our funding streams;
- Explore adjusting member fees, including the possibility of abolishing them altogether, to balance financial sustainability with accessibility; and
- Explore additional ways of generating our own income.

To reduce its reliance on Scottish Government funding for core operations, SIF must build on its success with Marine Litter funding and explore additional grant opportunities, as well as the potential for private investment. Achieving this will require dedicated resources or a reprioritisation of existing capacity to ensure that promising opportunities are not overlooked. While SIF employs three full-time staff, two are seconded for the majority of the working week, leaving just one full-time employee and an additional 8 hours per week available to deliver SIF's objectives. Funding options to support general operations and staffing are limited, as most available funds are earmarked for specific projects. We plan to apply for general resource funding from bodies such as the National Lottery and Robertson Trust, where appropriate, to support the continued growth and stability of the organisation.

In 2024/25, we increased annual member subscriptions by 20%, with rates set at £30 for community organisations, £10 for individuals, and £50-£100 for larger associated organisations, such as universities and other island stakeholders. To strengthen our membership revenue and foster broader engagement, we will explore two potential approaches: adjusting membership fees where appropriate and considering the option of abolishing fees entirely. The goal behind these approaches is to strike a balance between financial sustainability and inclusivity. While increasing fees may be necessary to support the growing demands of our work, removing fees altogether could eliminate financial barriers, encouraging more islanders and organisations to join, thus broadening our network and impact. Both strategies will be carefully evaluated to ensure that we continue to meet the diverse needs of our island communities while securing a stable future for SIF.

Whilst we undertake the relevant evaluations, we will also focus on two key actions to increase our membership:

1. Enhancing Membership Benefits

The SIF Board has decided to open our events to all stakeholders, aiming to reach potential new members and demonstrate the value of supporting SIF through membership. Restricting events to members-only would limit our ability to connect with and provide value to a wider audience. To substantially increase membership fees or introduce a tiered membership model, we would need to expand the range of benefits offered. Potential additions may include a members-only newsletter, access to exclusive events featuring specialist speakers and policymakers, and other unique offerings. We must also consider the VAT implications of providing exclusive services, which would incur an additional 20% VAT charge. Currently, our pricing remains affordable for all third-sector groups, including Development Trusts and Community Councils, ensuring that we can reach all 93 islands. In 2025/26, our strategy will focus on raising awareness about the value SIF offers to island community organisations, which will help increase core subscription income, alongside expanding the content and publicity of our online events.

2. Expanding Membership Reach

Our goal is to increase membership by 10% annually, aiming to reach 100 members by 2028/29. Achieving this target will significantly enhance our network, broaden the representation of island communities across Scotland, and ensure that SIF continues to be a vital voice for islands at both local and national levels. To support this growth, we will implement a range of strategies to both attract new members and retain current ones.

First, we will focus on outreach efforts to ensure that all island communities are aware of the benefits and opportunities available through SIF membership. This will include

targeted communication through direct outreach to community organisations, hosting local events, and running digital campaigns that emphasise the importance of a united voice for island communities. We will also develop and promote resources that demonstrate the tangible benefits of membership, such as access to policy-making discussions, training opportunities, and networking with other island stakeholders.

Additionally, we will strengthen our relationship with existing members to enhance engagement and ensure they feel valued. This will involve increasing opportunities for collaboration, participation in consultations, and providing members with a more active role in shaping policy discussions that affect their communities. We will encourage members to participate in joint submissions and policy sessions with Scottish Government representatives, further embedding them into the policymaking process. As our membership base grows, we will introduce mechanisms to facilitate peer-to-peer sharing and learning, helping to create a vibrant and supportive community of island leaders and advocates.

To foster broader inclusivity, we aim to expand our associated members to include a wider range of organisations, with a particular focus on attracting larger associated members such as universities, businesses, and other key island stakeholders. We aim to increase the number of associated members from larger organisations from 8 to 12. This targeted growth will help ensure that SIF's network is truly representative of all island communities across Scotland.

Finally, we will align our growth efforts with broader campaigns, projects, and policy advocacy that attract potential members invested in the sustainability and resilience of island communities. By actively highlighting our role as a central hub for island interests and solutions, we will position SIF as an essential resource and partner for all island-related initiatives. Through increased visibility and engagement, we will ensure that SIF is seen as the go-to network for island communities to connect, collaborate, and advocate for the issues that matter most to them.

By working toward these objectives, we will continue to grow a robust, representative network that strengthens the collective voice of Scotland's island communities, while also ensuring that SIF remains financially resilient and effective in its mission.

Partnership Strategy

SIF is committed to nurturing and strengthening our existing partnerships while actively exploring opportunities to establish new, mutually beneficial collaborations with other third-sector organisations. To achieve this, SIF will:

- Maintain and deepen our strong relationship with the Scottish Government Islands Team.
- Collaborate closely with the Scottish Government Islands Team to expand on established policy connections, ensuring stronger links with other key thematic areas, particularly in relation to the development of Island Communities Impact Assessments (ICIAs).
- Enhance our connections with Local Government to improve collaboration and advocacy for island communities.
- Strengthen relationships with key third-sector organisations to drive collective impact.
- Actively seek out and cultivate new partnerships with organisations that align with our mission and goals.

This approach will ensure SIF continues to have a significant influence in shaping policy and advocating for island communities while building a robust network of support across sectors.

To maintain and deepen our strong relationship with the Scottish Government Islands Team (SGIT), we will focus on regular engagement and collaborative efforts. We will hold monthly meetings with key members of SGIT to ensure ongoing communication, share updates, and address emerging issues or needs from island communities. Additionally, we will develop and implement joint initiatives or projects that align with the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and the National Islands Plan, reinforcing SIF's role as a key collaborator in these efforts. To further strengthen our partnership, we will co-host events such as workshops or roundtable discussions, where both SIF and SGIT can present progress, share challenges, and engage with island communities to gather feedback. Finally, we will ensure that senior members of both SIF and SGIT participate together in conferences, events, or policy discussions where the needs of island communities are highlighted, showcasing our collaborative approach in advocating for island interests.

We will collaborate closely with (SGIT to expand on established policy connections, particularly in relation to the development of Island Communities Impact Assessments (ICIAs). To support this, we will continue to develop dedicated working groups focused on specific thematic areas related to ICIAs, such as housing, healthcare, and economic development, ensuring that island community representatives are actively involved in the policymaking process. Additionally, we will provide capacity-building opportunities

to support SGIT, such as facilitating information sessions to help island communities better engage in the ICIA process. We will also work together to develop clear, actionable policy briefings or impact reports on key island issues, which can be used in the development of ICIA's and other policy initiatives. To further enhance collaboration, we will explore the potential to create shared resources, such as a digital platform or knowledge repository, where both SGIT and local governments can access relevant data, case studies, and best practices from island communities. Finally, we will implement regular feedback loops to share island community concerns and experiences directly with SGIT, ensuring that the ICIA's are refined and improved based on real-world input.

We will enhance our connections with Local Government to improve collaboration and advocacy for island communities. To achieve this, we will organise regular regional meetings with Local Government representatives to foster a better understanding of local challenges, share best practices, and discuss policy alignment for island communities. We will also work closely with Local Government officials to co-develop and advocate for policies that are tailored to the unique needs of island communities, ensuring their voices are heard at both the local and national levels. Additionally, we will facilitate cross-sector workshops where both Local Government and island community representatives can engage with Scottish Government officials, providing a collaborative space for feedback and solution-building. Finally, we will develop joint advocacy campaigns with Local Government to highlight island-specific challenges, such as housing, transport, and broadband, ensuring these concerns are addressed in national policies.

We will enhance and deepen our relationships with key third-sector organisations to drive collective impact. To do this, we will establish regular communication channels, including monthly or quarterly meetings, newsletters, and email updates, ensuring that we remain informed about ongoing activities and stay aligned with our partners' priorities. Additionally, we will organise joint events and workshops that bring together stakeholders from a range of third-sector organisations, fostering discussions around shared challenges, solutions, and collaborative opportunities. These events could include thematic seminars, policy discussions, or knowledge-sharing sessions. Lastly, we will work closely with our partners to develop shared tools and resources, such as research papers, data, and case studies, that benefit both our organisation and the wider third-sector community, amplifying our collective impact.

We will actively seek and cultivate new partnerships with organisations that align with our mission and goals. This will begin with targeted outreach to identify potential partners in the third sector, foundations, and businesses, followed by direct communication highlighting shared goals and collaboration opportunities. We will engage in networking at third-sector events and leverage existing relationships to

expand our network. To ensure successful partnerships, we will clearly articulate the mutual value proposition and collaborate on joint advocacy campaigns to amplify the voices of island communities. We will also ensure cultural alignment for long-term, productive relationships. Finally, in collaboration with the Scottish Government Islands Team, we will deepen our partnerships across policy areas such as energy, transport, digital connectivity, housing, childcare, and depopulation, which are vital to island communities.

Organisation Design Strategy

The overarching goal is to align SIF's structure with its mission, values, and strategic objectives, fostering greater efficiency and productivity. Over the next 12 months, we will focus on enhancing the organisation's resilience and operational effectiveness through the following key actions:

- Appoint two Vice Chairs by December 2025 to bolster leadership capacity and support the continued growth of SIF;
- Review and refine the current reporting structure by December 2025 to improve clarity, streamline operations, and enhance accountability;
- Explore the potential benefits of changing SIF's legal structure and pursuing charitable status, ensuring we make a well-informed decision that aligns with the organisation's long-term goals.

The current management structure within SIF involves three staff members, each directly line-managed by the Chair of the organisation, with additional support provided by other Directors of the Board in key thematic areas as needed. This support is further enhanced through our newly established Mentorship Programme. While initial approval for proposals is granted by the Chair, the final decision-making authority rests with the Board of Directors.

SIF is committed to advancing the Scottish Government's Fair Work First policy as part of our ongoing efforts to continuously improve the organisation. Our Fair Work Policy, approved in late 2023, is reviewed annually to ensure we remain aligned with best practices. Specifically, all of our employees are paid above the real Living Wage, are not on zero-hour contracts, and are offered highly flexible and family-friendly working arrangements. Furthermore, as previously mentioned we have implemented a mentoring programme that pairs staff members with Directors, fostering open communication and ensuring that employees' voices are heard and valued throughout the organisation.

Legal Structure

SIF was incorporated on 9 July 2008 as a company limited by guarantee and is not currently a registered charity. Its Articles of Association were last updated in October 2019.

In February 2025, external advice was sought to explore the potential benefits of SIF obtaining charitable status. One significant advantage of being a registered charity is the ability to access funding sources that are exclusively available to charitable organisations. Additionally, charitable status often enhances public trust and confidence, as charities are widely recognised for operating within a well-regulated and accountable framework.

A report will be presented to our Board and members in Autumn 2025, outlining the findings and providing recommendations on whether seeking charitable status would be advantageous. A decision will be made regarding the most suitable legal structure to support SIF's strategic objectives and ensure its long-term sustainability.

Organisational Overview

Directors

SIF is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors, elected from and representing its membership. These Directors act as ambassadors and contribute unpaid resources through participation in working groups, responding to consultations, and providing valuable expertise. Elections are held annually during our Annual General Meeting, and currently, no remuneration is provided to our Directors. The SIF Board meets every two months, while the dedicated Finance Group convenes monthly. An overview of our Directors and their backgrounds, including the invaluable lived experience they bring from their respective islands, is provided in Annex B. This experience is essential for understanding the true impact of policies on islanders in their daily lives.

Current Staff

SIF has one full-time staff member, two part-time staff members, and engages external support, including a part-time communications consultant and two contractors dedicated to delivering the Marine Litter Project. All staff bring lived island experience or prior island policy expertise to their roles, enabling us to support job creation within island communities. Additionally, our two part-time staff members are frequently seconded to the Scottish Government and the Scottish Futures Trust to contribute to critical islands policy and manage specific funding streams focused on island needs.

Working Groups

Given the breadth and volume of SIF's work, it is not possible for staff and directors alone to deliver everything. As such, we operate several working groups, composed of volunteer members and often chaired by a Board Director, focusing on thematic areas such as housing and marine litter. These groups report to the SIF Board through board papers and presentations, ensuring that the work aligns with our strategic goals and objectives.

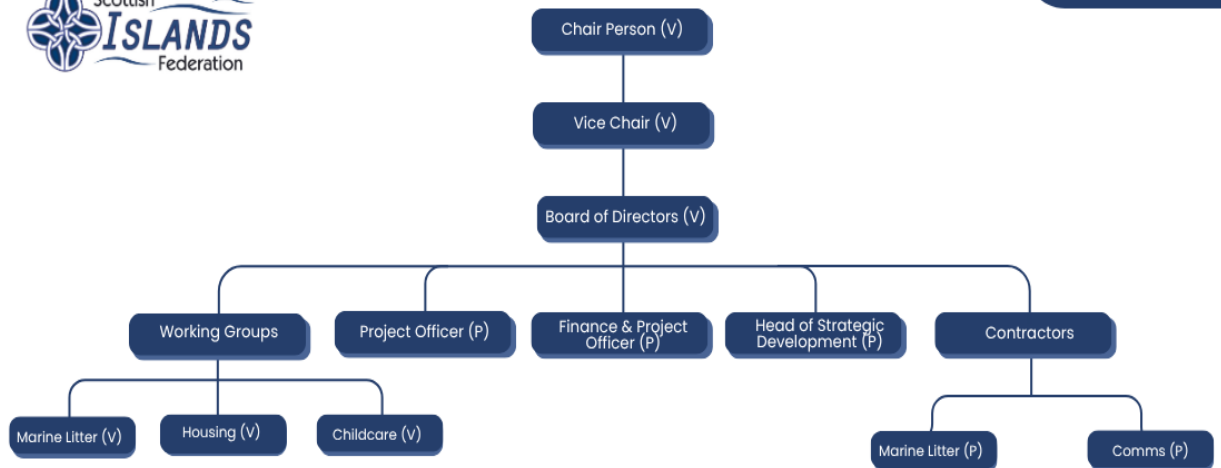
SIF will:

- By December 2025, ensure that the Terms of Reference for our working groups are aligned with SIF's core aims and remain relevant to their intended purposes.
- At the beginning of each project, ensure that our working groups secure identifiable and adequate external funding, where required.

- Assign each working group responsibility for its own cashflow management and budget planning, where applicable.
- Ensure that all working groups adhere to the established SIF reporting structure to maintain consistency and transparency.

An organisational chart of the organisation can be seen below:

ORGANISATIONAL CHART



Communications Strategy

The goal of SIF's communication strategy is to deliver cohesive, timely messaging that effectively reaches our target audience while clearly conveying our key focus areas and work streams. Ensuring that island communities are kept informed and engaged in the evolving landscape of islands policy is central to our membership and network. This was underscored in the [National Islands Plan Consultation Analysis](#), which recognised SIF as playing a critical role in understanding and representing the views of island communities.

Over the next 12 months, SIF will:

- Evaluate our current marketing and communications materials, including newsletters, member emails, and social media engagement.
- Review key marketing metrics, such as social media engagement, website traffic, media coverage, and email subscriptions.
- Develop a strategy for sharing member news, increasing engagement through social media with highlight stories and case studies.
- Explore opportunities for joint communications and marketing campaigns with other like-minded organisations.
- Assess our website to ensure it is user-friendly, accessible, and effectively showcases our work, events, and news.
- Review our capacity for face-to-face engagements and evaluate any impacts this may have.
- Draft a comprehensive communications strategy for the period 2026–2028.

SIF is uniquely positioned to provide timely, credible information to both policymakers and island communities, playing a vital role in shaping well-informed policies that lead to improved outcomes for islanders. No other organisation focused specifically on island communities matches SIF's depth of experience and ability to leverage existing relationships, while continually building on critical contacts and workstreams that directly impact island residents.

Our growing social media engagement reflects the increasing strength and reach of SIF's communications. This progress is driven by a strong calendar of events, active working groups that generate valuable content, and deeper relationships with our members—many of whom now tag us in their posts or share updates directly for wider promotion.

Between December 2024 and March 2025, we published 126 posts on Facebook, generating over 66,700 views. A standout post promoting the first National Islands Plan event dates achieved more than 14,000 views, with each reshare of the dates averaging

around 1,000 views. The strong sign-up numbers at each event underscore the effectiveness of this promotional effort.

Ahead of our AGM in March 2025, we also ran a successful director recruitment campaign. A key highlight was an interview with SIF Vice Chair Luke Fraser, which drew 4,927 views and helped boost interest in the opportunity.

Another communications success was our Skillshare and Networking event, delivered by the Marine Litter Working Group. Promotional posts for the event averaged 600 views each and helped attract 50 attendees. The event also created valuable collaboration opportunities with partner social media accounts, broadening our reach—some posts reached up to 70% non-followers—and contributing to a noticeable growth in our follower base.

To support our continued growth and impact, it is essential that SIF maintains a strong and consistent presence across our core communication platforms—Instagram, Facebook, our website, and the e-bulletin. Sustaining this visibility and engagement will require dedicated resources, particularly the expertise of a communications professional, to ensure a focused and effective strategy throughout the years ahead. By strategically planning and prioritising our communications work, SIF can further amplify its reach, deepen engagement with members and stakeholders, and ensure that island communities are meaningfully represented and heard in both political and public discourse.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Scottish Islands Federation's (SIF) strategic plan for 2025–2030 outlines a clear and actionable path forward, reinforcing our role as a leading voice for Scotland's island communities. As a dynamic and evolving organisation, SIF is committed to addressing the needs of island communities both nationally and across Europe. Recognising the ever-changing political and financial landscape, we are dedicated to adapting and innovating to ensure our continued financial sustainability while providing the highest level of support to our members.

By strengthening connections, enhancing policy engagement, and highlighting the unique challenges faced by island residents, we aim to create a more sustainable and empowered future for Scotland's islands. With a strong history of representation and valuable networks, SIF is well-positioned to continue influencing positive change in the policy landscape.

As the key conduit between island communities and the Scottish Government, we ensure that the voices of islanders are not only heard but actively shape the policies that impact their daily lives. Through the strategic actions laid out in this plan, SIF will build on its legacy, continue supporting island communities, and contribute to shaping a more equitable and prosperous future for Scotland's islands.

Annex A

Overview of Existing Partners

Our Scottish Partners

We work with a growing number of organisations to support projects, collaborate and add an island perspective. In Scotland this includes:

Scottish Government Islands Team

SIF is funded by the Scottish Government and works closely with the Islands Team in supporting island community engagement in the National Islands Plan and providing a two-way conduit between island communities and the Scottish Government.

Scottish Rural Action

SIF works closely with [Scottish Rural Action](#) , supporting the Scottish & Islands Rural Parliament and providing co-secretariat support to the Cross Party Group on Islands.

Scottish Community Alliance (SCA)

SIF is a member of [SCA](#) which is a coalition of national networks and intermediaries, each one representing a different aspect of Scotland's diverse community sector. SCA also delivers the Community Learning Exchange, funded by the Scottish Government, and available to members.

Community Energy Scotland (CES) <https://www.communityenergyscotland.org.uk>

CES is a member-led, independent organisation focussed on increasing community resilience and enabling its members to play a significant role in an equitable energy transition. SIF is a member of CES and worked in partnership in the initial stages of the Carbon Neutral Islands project.

Young Islanders Network (YIN)

[YIN](#) is a network of groups working in our local communities, and together, to get the voices of young islanders heard in Government and beyond.

Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS)

[DTAS](#) is a member-led organisation that promotes, supports and represents development trusts across Scotland. SIF is a member of DTAS and we have worked closely together delivering events.

Academic & Research Partners

SIF has worked with a number of academic and research partners in supporting island community engagement, research and policy development. This includes, [SRUC Rural Policy Centre](#), [Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law and Governance](#), [The James Hutton Institute](#), [Community Development Lense \(CoDEL\)](#), [UHI Institute for Northern Studies](#), [Scottish Centre for Island Studies](#).

Our International Partners

European Small Islands Federation

[The European Small Islands Federation](#) (ESIN) started as a network in 2000 and was formalised into a federation in 2005. It now represents 11 island federations in Åland, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Scotland and Sweden. ESIN is reaching out to 450 000 islanders on 1500 small islands throughout Europe, and SIF held the role of Chair for 3 years and currently Vice Chair as well as being active within its energy and policy working groups.

CPRM Island Commission

[The Island Commission of the Confederation of Peripheral and Maritime Regions](#) (CPMR) is a powerful EU lobbying group representing island regions, bringing in the smaller islands dimension. The Island Commission is very active on Cohesion and state aid, maritime affairs, accessibility and connectivity, as well as energy and climate.

FEDARENE

Through ESIN, SIF is a member of [FEDARENE](#)'s island college which serves as a platform not only to its members but to all stakeholders striving for energy transition: public authorities, non-governmental, organisations, citizens, small and medium-sized enterprises and financial institutions amongst others.

Comdhail Oilean na Heireann – Irish islands federation

As member of ESIN and a geographical neighbour, SIF has enjoyed close collaboration with [COE](#) including two projects funded through LEADER, based on the concept of SMART ISLANDS (<https://www.scottish-islands-federation.co.uk/smart-islands-in-scotland-ireland/>).

Island innovation

Each year, [Island Innovation](#) organises the Virtual Island Summit, a free and entirely online event designed to connect global islands to share their common experiences through a digital platform. SIF has supported the Summit through an ambassador role over a number years.

Annex B

Overview of Current Board Membership

Luke Fraser, Chair: Luke is employed by The North Ronaldsay Trust Limited (NRT), having being previously employed by Orkney Island Council Housing. He has been instrumental in securing around half the funding for a £2million project in North Ronaldsay, has previously worked with NRT in securing funding to renovate the former schoolhouse and bring it back into use. Luke has a vast experience in fund raising, of the third sector and public bodies. He recently presented at a UK wide event hosted by The Countryside Fund, has also presented at DTAS Conference amongst others. Luke has specific expertise in Housing and Renewables.

Elizabeth Taggart: SIF Vice Chair, Treasurer and development officer for the Raasay Development Trust, represents Skye and Raasay on the SIF board. As the development officer for Raasay Elizabeth has been involved in taking forward a housing project as well as developing renewable energy and tourism infrastructure. Before working in community development Elizabeth's background was in clinical laboratories and then in Marine Development.

Kieron Brogan, Director: Kieron lives on Sanday, one of the Outer North Isles of Orkney, where he works as the Community Development and Operations Manager for Sanday Development Trust. With over 40 years of business experience and a strong background in IT, he is passionate about building resilient, sustainable island communities. His key areas of focus include housing, creating opportunities for young people and families, and ensuring islanders can live full lives without inequality.

Camille Dressler, Past Chair/Director. Camille represents the Small Isles Community Council (the islands of Eigg, Rum, Muck and Canna). Camille was also elected as Chair of the European Small Islands Federation in September 2016, but stepped down in 2019 to be one of 2 ESIN vice-chairs. Her interests are community empowerment and community energy, as well as heritage and the arts. A Gaelic learner, she has established a crofting museum and bilingual crofting trail on the isle of Eigg and is a founder member of Comunn Eachdraidh Eige.

Alastair Fleming, Director: Alastair is co-opted to the Board and is retired teacher from the island of Luing who was crucial to the building of the Atlantic Islands Centre. He has a great interest in geology and natural history.

David Herriot, Director: David is a former chartered surveyor with a strong background in community ownership and public sector valuation. Currently chairing Beachwatch Bute (a marine litter charity) and on boards of Fyne Homes, (Housing Association) Fyne Futures and Fyne Initiatives, Bute Shinty Club and the CalMac Community Board.

Ina Glover, Director: CEO of Islay Development Initiative which has developed and grown into a real force for change and community benefit, employing 20 people and delivering a wide range of projects and services including, a post office, driving school, zero waste and marine litter work, community hubs, halls, housing, lots of events, forestry and woodland croft creation. Ina also sits on the Argyll Small Woods board and the Carbon Neutral Islands Islay steering group and is currently finishing a masters in sustainable rural development.

Janet Marshall, Director: Janet is a founder and the Chair of Clean Coast Outer Hebrides which, as well as organising beach cleans, campaigns and educates about waste in our oceans, single use plastic and climate change, and has been mentioned in the House of Commons as an example of environmental excellence. Working closely with Scottish Island Federation, plus Marine Conservation Society, Coastal Communities Network and Surfers Against Sewage as well as many local organisations, Janet has extensive and highly useful knowledge of people, places, legislation and sources of funding and is a keen public speaker. Janet has worked with the Marine Litter Working Group for a number of years and would like to build on this, bringing her energy, experience and inspiration to join the Board.

Sheila Tulloch, Director: Director and treasurer of Bressay Development Limited, Sheila lives on Bressay. She spent more than 11 years working within Shetland Islands Council's Economic Development Service as Co-ordinator for the Shetland LEADER Programme. Prior to that she worked for Shetland Enterprise (HIE) both as an employee and on a self-employed consultancy basis over a period of around ten years. Sheila has an informed insight into the operations of a wide range of community organisations and small businesses throughout Shetland, and a special interest in the most fragile communities. She is a Chartered Accountant with a degree in Accountancy and Economics and a Post Graduate Diploma in Local Economic Development.

Annex C

SIF facilitates the creation and management of topical working groups to provide a more in-depth forum for specific project discussion, policy interaction and the development of communities of practice. These include:

Island Housing Working Group

The Island Housing Working Group was established following an initial knowledge exchange event and now brings together members from across Scotland's islands. Its purpose is to create a network for island groups with an active role or interest in housing, enabling them to connect, share expertise, and build a community of practice. The group provides a space to explore housing models suited to island contexts, identify common challenges, and work collaboratively on solutions that can inform both Local Authority and Scottish Government policy. It also seeks to champion community-led housing and promote opportunities for inter-island collaboration.

To date, the group has delivered a range of activities, including a series of knowledge exchange sessions, meetings with the Minister for Housing and More Homes to feed into the *Rural & Islands Housing Action Plan* and the *Rural & Island Housing Fund*, joint contributions to policy development, and support for two housing-focused meetings of the Cross-Party Group on Islands.

Marine Litter Working Group

The Marine Litter Working Group (SIF-MLWG) plays a central role in advancing the Scottish Islands Federation's overarching strategic objectives by addressing one of the most pressing environmental challenges facing island communities—marine litter.

In support of Scotland's Marine Litter Strategy, the MLWG acts as one of the responsible leads for delivering the strategy's objective of "*understanding Scottish island beach litter*." The group undertakes quarterly surveys to monitor the prevalence, composition, and sources of marine litter on island beaches, providing vital data to inform national policy. In addition, it advocates for long-term, stable funding to sustain community clean-up efforts and promotes an "island-proofed" approach to policymaking to ensure the unique needs and circumstances of island communities are fully recognised.

Aligned with Scotland's Blue Economy ambition, the group actively combats marine litter, with a particular focus on plastics from marine industries. It promotes the sustainable use of resources, supports community-led clean-up initiatives, fosters cross-sector collaboration, and explores circular economy opportunities in marine litter management and recycling.

Within the context of the National Islands Plan (NIP), SIF-MLWG contributes to the development of revised policy frameworks, provides input to Island Communities Impact Assessments, and empowers local communities through citizen science and engagement initiatives that address environmental and sustainability challenges.

Through this work, the Marine Litter Working Group serves as a strategic pillar of SIF's mission—amplifying island voices, enhancing policy engagement, building effective partnerships, and diversifying funding streams to support a more sustainable and resilient future for Scotland's island communities.

Island Childcare Working Group

This working group is still at an early stage, emerging from the pressing need to find practical solutions to the shortage of childcare across many islands. While access to childcare is a challenge throughout Scotland, in island contexts the impact is magnified — affecting not only families but also the wider community's ability to retain and attract people, services, and businesses. Recognising this, we are developing an island-wide group to collaborate on the issue, share effective approaches, and strengthen the collective voice of islands in shaping policy.

To date, the group has convened two knowledge exchange meetings, delivered a dedicated childcare session at the Scottish Rural & Islands Parliament, and is working with Highlands & Islands Enterprise and the Care and Learning Alliance to contribute to their exploration of alternative childcare models in rural and island settings.

Decarbonisation Working Group

This short-term working group was established to act as an important conduit between the emerging Carbon Neutral Islands (CNI) project and island communities. Its remit, agreed by members, was to ensure the project was grounded in lived island experience while also supporting wider learning and collaboration. The group's priorities included engaging directly with the CNI project, building and sustaining a community of practice, promoting a just transition with island communities at its heart, and fostering inter-island connections to share knowledge and support. Members also sought to identify common challenges, develop and share solutions, and strengthen policy input by drawing on both practical experience and technical expertise.

The group met monthly and contributed significant time and expertise—largely on a voluntary basis—to support the development of CNI. As the project became established, many of the group's original aims were taken forward as part of Community Energy Scotland's role in delivering CNI, allowing the working group's early efforts to shape the foundations of the programme.